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TESTIMONY RE HB 4264 AND SB 1296
By Fern Katz

In 1950 I graduated from Wayne State University with a degree in physics. I was one of three women with a physics degree that year. At that time science fields were dominated by men, and they still are. I succeeded in this degree in spite of the fact that I grew up in a home where a good girl lived at home until she got married.

While I was in high school I was encouraged to take science and mathematics classes. Indeed they were required. I learned early that I could compete with men in these fields and be successful. And I was encouraged to do so. I spent 29 happy years as a mathematics teacher, but had the job opportunity fields not been closed to me as a young married woman, who knows where I would have gone?

Today I have embarked on a new career. I am an elected trustee of the Southfield, MI, School Board. As a trustee I advocate for all of the 10,000 students in my district. Southfield has four high school academies located in Southfield High School and Southfield-Lathrup High School, open to all students:

- Arts and Communications
- Global Business and Information Technology
- Medical and Natural Sciences
- Engineering and manufacturing Sciences

In addition we have the Southfield Regional Academic Campus for students who do not have the credits to graduate with their classes, but are willing to work doubly hard to make up their credits and graduate with their classes. All of these academies have male and female students.

Like all other school districts in Michigan, Southfield is in a money crunch. We are looking to balance our budget with shrinking resources and inflation. It would be fiscally irresponsible as well as discriminatory to open same sex schools and academies. In addition, it would contribute to the old stereotypes that women cannot compete successfully with men, and also that men cannot enter into the so-called women's fields and compete successfully and without stigma.

And who would teach the same sex classes? Would we require that women teach our female students and men teach our male students? That would be a major headache in staffing. If men only teach sciences, and women only teach the health sciences, that leads to more stereotyping and defeats affirmative action.

It is wrong to open same sex schools in Detroit for the same reasons. Both young men and young women need to know that they can compete with the opposite sex in any field and be successful. They need to have teachers of both sexes.

Same sex schools would be a waste of important resources: dollars, infrastructure and staff. I urge you not to pass this bill out of committee.